in **a** power plant in Tripura to monetize their unutilized gas. Government policy is guided by the mandate of the Common Minimum Programme to enhance the country's energy security.

Advisors for Indo-lran Pipeline Project

3003. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) wheher it is a fact that Government have received good response for appointment of Advisors for Iran pipeline;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government have appointed Advisors for Iran pipeline out of the proposal it received; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) The Government has decided to appoint Financial, Technical and Legal Consultants for the Iran—Pakistan—India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project. IOC were assigned the task of appointing the Financial Consultants and GAIL were asked to appoint the Technical and Legal Consultants.

IOC and GAIL received five bids and four bids, respectively, from major international companies for appointment as Financial Consultants and Technical Consultants. After evaluating these bids, IOC have appointed M/s. Erust & Young as Financial Consultants, and GAIL have appointed M/s. ILF Consulting Engineers as Technical Consultants for the Project. The process of appointing the Legal Consultants is at present underway and should be completed within the next two weeks.

Scarcity of LPG in Andhra Pradesh

3004. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in some districts of Andhra Pradesh like Guntur and Prakasam it takes forty-five days to get **a** refill of LPG gas these days;

(b) if so, the detailed causes for such delay in giving LPG gas to domestic users;

(c) the steps proposed to study the reasons for the delay in giving such LPG gas cylinders in some areas;

(d) whether such delays are restricted only to Andhra Pradesh; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have reported a backlog of LPG in the range of 2-8 days in 2 out of 11 markets of Guntur district and 4-12 days in 9 out of 14 markets of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

(b) to (e) LPG requirements are met by a combination of domestic production and imports. A temporary shortage of LPG emerged in September 2005 on account of various factors. PSU production in the period April-September 2005 was 303 (Thousand Metric Tonne) TMT less than planned; Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) production was 190 TMT less than planned. In consequence, physical inventories with oil marketing companies (OMCs) declined from 333 TMT at the beginning of April, 2005 to 190 TMT at the beginning of October, 2005. Then, with effect from 4th October, 2005, RIL, the single largest domestic supplier of LPG, shut down their Fluidized Catalytic Cracker (FCC) unit at Jamnagar for maintenance work. Moreover, at just about the same time, as RIL confirmed its shutdown effective October, 2005, domestic production prospects were seriously impacted by the fire in Mumbai High North and global LPG supplies became tight, largely on account of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on US refineries. All these factors put together upset the plans made by OMCs to effect imports in time to offset the anticipated shortage in supplies.

Through a combination of inventory management and imports, directly handled by a composite task force of the OMCs under the close supervision of the Government, efforts have been made to overcome the physical shortages of supply. In addition to the arrangements made earlier by OMCs to import 642 TMT of LPG during the period October-December 2005, arrangements have been made to import an additional quantity of

237.9 TMT during this period. The overall physical shortage in the country at present has been reduced to only about 1.5% of the average monthly consumption of LPG. However, the backlog at the micro-level, including the markets in Andhra Pradesh, may vary from market on account of operational reasons.

With the restoration of production of LPG in RIL's refinery from 1st December 2005, the supply situation is expected to substantively improve and normalize in the coming few weeks.

Commercial use of LPG

3005. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that LPG cylinders are being diverted for commercial use in connivance with LPG agencies and its delivery boys, they put Government to financial loss;

(b) what remedial measures Government have taken to check this malpractices; and

(c) the action taken by Government against the erring agencies during the last three years, year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have reported instances of diversion of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes by their LPG distributors.

(b) The following measures have been taken to prevent the diversion/ black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes:-

(i) Under the LPG (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000 promulgated under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 the diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes by the distributors of OMCs is prohibited. The State Governments are empowered to take action against erring distributors under the provisions of this Order.

(ii) State Governments have been alerted from time to time to take steps against the diversion of domestic cylinders for unauthorized usage.